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Message Text

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61
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 CU-02 SY-05 SCCT-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /073 W
---------- 101562
R 121450Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6045
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMCONSUL PORT SAID POUCH

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT EG
SUBJECT: MAJOR FIRE AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CAIRO

REF: CAIRO 10771

1. THERE ARE VERY FEW NEW FACTS IN THE STORY. DEAN LAMONT BELIEVES NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT IS ACCURATE CONCERNING REPORTING OF FIRE BY EGYPTIAN POLICE. BY THE TIME HE HAD ARRIVED AT THE SCENE, THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AND POLICE HAD ALREADY SWUNG INTO ACTION. HE HAD EARLIER ASSUMED THAT NOTHING WAS DONE UNITL AUC NOTIFIED. START OF FIRE MUST HAVE BEEN ABOUT 2:00 A.M. HE WAS CALLED ABOUT 2:20 A.M. AND FIRE EQUIPMENT WAS THERE AROUND 3:00 A.M. GUARDS ARE STILL BEING HELD, AND AUC HAS HAD NO CONTACT WITH THEM. THEY WERE HIRED BY CONTRACTOR.

2. LAMONT IS PREPARING AN INTERNAL AUC REPORT AND WILL SEND AMBASSADOR A COPY. HE IS ALSO ASKING FOR A REPORT FOR STATE SECURITY, AND WILL MAKE IT AVAILABLE IF RECEIVED. HE IS SATISFIED WITH ADEQUACY OF EGYPTIAN EFFORTS, AND FEELS THAT THE INVESTIGATION IS BEING HANDLED AT VERY HIGH LEVEL. HE SAYS
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HE WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT STATEMENTS THAT ELECTRICAL WIRING WAS

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CAUSE OF FIRE, BUT FINDS IT STRANGE THAT FIRE APPARENTLY BROKE OUT
IN FOUR PLACES, THE CORNERS OF THE BUILDING,WITH NO SIGN THAT
FIRE HAD SPREAD BETWEEN THE FOUR POINTS.

3. MAJOR FIRE WAS STREET SIDE OF CONSTRUCTION, AT CORNER WHICH
JOINS THE WALL OF THE NEW THEATER. LAMONT BELIEVES THERE IS
CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO NEW THEATHER -- PLASTER INSIDE THEATHER FELL
OFF, AND LIGHTING SYSTEM FELL. HE BELIEVES NEW THEATER WILL BE
OUT OF USE UNTIL SPRING SEMESTER.

4. CONCERNING DAMAGE TO THE LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION, HE IS UNABLE
TO ESTIMATE EXTENT OF DAMAGE, PHYSICAL OR FINANCIAL. THE
INSURANCE INVESTIGATORS AND ESTIMATORS WERE AT THE SITE SURVEYING
SITUATION. HE WILL KEEP US INFORMED. FROM HIS OBERVATION, HE
BELIEVES THAT IF FIRE DID NOT DAMAGE STRUCTURALLY THE ALREADY
POURED CONCRETE, THEN FINANCIAL AND TIME SETBACK MINIMAL-- COST
OF SCAFFOLDING AND A MONTH'S DELAY. HOWEVER, IF CONCRETE WEAKENED
STRUCTURALLY, THEN PART OF WORK WOULD HAVE TO BE REMOVED AND
STARTED ANEW. SINCE "SUPER-STRONG" CONCRETE BEING USED, HE
WOULD ESTIMATE THE TIME DELAY AS CONSIDERABLE. AUC ENGINEERS
WERE QUESTIONED AS TO WHETHER THEY FELT CONCRETE HAD BEEN
WEAKENED, AND ANSWER WAS YES, GIVING LAMONT SOME CAUSE FOR
PESSIMISM.

5. LAMONT CONFIRMED THAT NEW THEATER FULLY INSURED BY AUC WITH
NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY. INSURANCE CARRIED BY CONTRACTOR
FOR LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION, AND LAMONT SAYS CONTRACTOR FULLY COVERED.
NEWSPAPERS MENTIONED FIGURE OF LE 100,000 IN DAMAGE, BUT THAT
IS JUST SOMEBODY'S GUESS.
EILTS

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